

# PRESS & GUIDE

## Vehicle mileage standards among bills on federal legislative plate

By Tim Powers  
Press & Guide Newspapers

### 15th U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

This is the first segment of an interview with U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-15th District). The discussion with the congressman on issues of particular interest to area communities will continue in future editions.

U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-15th District) met Thursday with editors of Heritage Newspapers to discuss a wide-ranging list of topics as the first year of the current congressional session comes to an end.

Before facing questions, Dingell talked about the bills he and fellow federal legislators have been working on.

The veteran congressman represents a large section of southeastern Michigan, including Dearborn and the Downriver area.

Despite divisions between Congress and President George W. Bush and a Senate with rules that allow minority Republicans to block action, Dingell believes the U.S. House of Representatives has "had a pretty good year."

One of the main thrusts of Dingell's attention was a federal energy bill that deals with corporate average fuel economy — CAFE — standards on autos, energy and global warming. He talked Thursday of an impasse on the issue and he worried about the discussions between the House and Senate, which, even though he is chair of the Commerce Committee, he could not control.

However, on Saturday he and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Senate leaders reached agreement on a bill that calls for CAFE at 35 mpg by 2020.

The bill is short of the higher levels and time frame wanted by Pelosi and other congressional leaders from the nation's West in their efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and oil consumption.

At the same time, Dingell was able to retain different levels for cars and light trucks, and to protect jobs at plants manufacturing smaller cars with incentives that give the industry more flexibility and certainty as it plans new vehicles. Credits for building vehicles that

run on biodiesel and ethanol as well as creating incentives for new breakthrough fuel efficient technology also are expected to help the auto companies.

"I need to protect the interests of the people I represent," Dingell said. "I have some difficulty in explaining to people that I'm not defending the industry, I'm defending the people I represent — the workers in the auto industry and the jobs. That is where the question is important. There are 700,000 people who work in the auto industry in the 15th District."

He noted that the requirements put additional expenses on the auto companies and that the advanced planning needed to produce new and different vehicles that meet the requirement would stress the whole industry.

Other legislation covered by Dingell included:

#### HEALTH CARE

House Resolution 4: Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007: Amends Medicare to require federal officials to negotiate lower prices with pharmaceutical manufacturers for prescription drug plan sponsors and Medicare Advantage organizations for covered drugs, individuals enrolled under a prescription drug plan or under a Medicare Advantage prescription drug plan.

Status: Passed in House. Referred to Senate committee.

H.R. 15: National Health Insurance Act: Requires that medical services, hospital services and other personal health services be made available to eligible individuals in all U.S. health-service areas as rapidly as possible.

"It is roughly the bill my father introduced years ago — brought up to date," Dingell said.

He has introduced the bill on a continuing basis.

"It is something that has to be done soon, because the auto industry is going broke on health care costs as is the rest of the manufacturing industry in the United States," he said.

Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R. 1017: Protecting Children's Health in Schools Act of 2007: To improve requirements under the Medicaid program for items and services furnished in or through an educational program or setting to children, including children with developmental, physical or mental health needs and for other purposes.

Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R. 2034: Medicare for All Act: Amends the Social Security Act to allow everyone to get Medicare by simply paying for it.

"It is a pretty good package and it makes a great deal of sense," Dingell said.

It would provide parity in coverage of mental health benefits, subject to appropriate cost sharing; each enrollee is free to choose his or her own doctor and private health plan; and benefits are similar to or no less than the health benefits coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

## 1 SCHIP

This bill — the state Children's Health Insurance Program — protects the health insurance coverage of some 6 million children who now depend on SCHIP during the course of the year. The bill also will cover 3.9 million children who are today uninsured.

""We have had a huge fight over this. We passed it by heavy votes in the House and Senate, but we did not have enough votes to override the president's veto.

"We are working with our Republican colleagues (to pass a bill), but we are running out of time," Dingell said.

## FOOD & DRUG SAFETY

H.R. 2900: Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007 or Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act of 2007: To amend the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs and for medical devices, to improve the Food and Drug Administration's ability to make sure Americans have safety of drugs,

Status: After conference with Senate, became H.R. 3580.

H.R. 3610: Food and Drug Import Safety Act of 2007: To amend the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act with respect to the safety of food and drugs imported into the United States, and for other purposes.

Status: Currently in committee.

## HOMELAND SECURITY

H.R. 338: Improving Communications Interoperability Grant Program Act: Amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to direct the secretary of Homeland Security to establish the Improve Communications for Emergency Response grant program to make grants to states and regions for initiatives to improve interoperable emergency communications.

Status: Now part of H.R. 863, Improving Communications Interoperability Grant Program Act.

## IRAQ

H.R. 3938: Bring Our Troops Home Responsibly Act of 2007: To repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243) and to require the withdrawal of the U.S. armed forces in Iraq within 30 days after the enactment of the act, and to complete such withdrawal by Jan. 20, 2009 — when a new president will take over.

"I am simply saying, Mr. President, you've made a mess," Dingell said. "You have to clean it up before you leave."

Status: Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and, in addition, to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the House speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

## LOCAL ISSUES

H.R. 518: International Solid Waste Importation and Management Act of 2007: To amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to allow states to ban foreign trash and implement an agreement between the United States and Canada on shipping trash across borders.

"This has met some opposition from New England and New York senators," Dingell said, pointing out those are areas that also send their trash to Michigan.

Status: Passed in House; referred to Senate committee.

Status: Received in the Senate and read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

## OTHER NOTABLE WORKS

As chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, Dingell plays a pivotal role in critical bills making headlines across America, including:

H.R. 3221: New Direction for Energy Independence, National Security and Consumer Protection Act: Moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production and modernizing energy infrastructure, through tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

This bill will remove more than 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions by 2030, an amount equal to the annual emissions of all cars on the road today.

The act as proposed would:

Advance the country's energy efficiency with improved appliance standards, lighting efficiency and green building codes.

Enhance the reliability and economy of the country's electric grid to incorporate communications and control technologies for a richer, more efficient, bidirectional grid.

Carry out congressional intent and prohibit the Department of Energy from setting arbitrary limits for loan guarantees that encourage the development of new projects that would reduce or sequester greenhouse gases.

Create a grant program to increase the availability of renewable fuels and encourage the installation or conversion of supporting infrastructure.

Encourage the domestic development and production of advanced plug-in hybrids and next generation batteries.

Improve state data collection required by the Energy Information Administration to support efficient energy markets.

Dingell wants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent to 80 percent by 2050 and reiterated his intention to address climate change and cap-and-trade in the fall

Status: Passed the House. The Senate and House are now in conference to work out the differences between the two bills.

H.R. 4040: Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act: This proposal bans children's products that contain lead, improving the efficiency and speed of product recalls, requiring mandatory safety standards and third-party testing for certain children's products, and increasing the cap on civil penalties imposed on violators. It also strengthens the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

"We've seen lead in toys," Dingell said. "The Chinese have sent us some awful stuff, not only in food, drugs and cosmetics, but also in toys and other consumer products."

Status: Forwarded by subcommittee to full committee. It is expected to be on the House floor before the end of the year.

Click here to return to story:

[http://www.pressandguide.com/stories/120507/loc\\_20071205008.shtml](http://www.pressandguide.com/stories/120507/loc_20071205008.shtml)